



# PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

# WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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FOURTH SERIES - No. 9.

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PROVIDENCE:

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.

1890.

The Providence Press:  
SNOW & FARNHAM, PRINTERS.  
37 Custom House Street.  
1890.

THE  
BURNSIDE EXPEDITION

AND THE  
ENGAGEMENT AT ROANOKE ISLAND.

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BY  
WILLIAM L. WELCH,  
[Late of Twenty-third Massachusetts Infantry.]

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[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]

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## ENGAGEMENT AT ROANOKE ISLAND.

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THE Coast Division was gathered at Annapolis, Md., in the fall of 1861. It was commanded by Brig.-Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, and organized into three brigades, respectively commanded by Brig.-Gen. John G. Foster, of the First Brigade; Brig.-Gen. Jesse L. Reno, of the Second Brigade, and Brig.-Gen. John G. Parke, of the Third Brigade. The troops in the First Brigade were the Twenty-third, Twenty-fourth, Twenty-fifth and Twenty-seventh Massachusetts, and the Tenth Connecticut. In the Second Brigade were the Sixth New Hampshire, Twenty-first Massachusetts, Fifty-first New

York, Ninth New Jersey, and Fifty-first Pennsylvania. In the Third Brigade were the Fourth Rhode Island, Fifth Rhode Island Battalion, Eighth Connecticut, Eleventh Connecticut, Fifty-third New York, and Eighty-ninth New York; and also Battery F, First Rhode Island Light Artillery.

My regiment, the Twenty-third Massachusetts, had left Lynnfield, Mass., on the 11th of November, and reached Annapolis via Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Perryville. At the latter place we were embarked on steamers, and went by water to the wharf, over the same route traveled by the Eighth Massachusetts and General Butler in April, 1861. When we left home our right flank company, Company A, had a natty Zouave uniform; we were drilled in Zouave style, and thought a great deal of ourselves; and in fact we added much to the looks of the regiment, but at Annapolis we were obliged to discard this big-legged, low-necked uniform for our own protection. The reason was, that some turkeys about a half mile away disturbed the sleep of the regiment so much, that a volunteer detail was made to correct the abuse, the turkeys were ad-

judged to be in error, and were removed to our camp, and some twenty odd of them were found concealed in the quarters of Company A, undoubtedly put there by the perpetrators of the deed, to avert suspicion from them, and we were made to suffer for them. This vicarious atonement might do for once, but the Colonel didn't want us to suffer again, therefore he ordered the uniform discarded, and we never again had to stand any more than our share of blame for any such *accidents*.

This change of uniforms was disastrously uncomfortable for me, for while the Zouave uniform, having been made for me, fitted me splendidly, the government uniform didn't fit me at all. I was number 90 in the company, and of course had the 90th choice, and when eighty-nine men have been suited out of a lot of one hundred coats and pants, the ninetieth has almost Hobson's choice. The coat that I secured would almost fit me now, and I weigh over seventy pounds more than I did in 1861, but I found it convenient to wear underclothing with. I was compelled to wear the coat, for there was no redress.

I couldn't get a pair of army shoes to fit me, they were all too large, and the day we broke camp and went on board transports at Annapolis, I walked the two miles with the sole of one of my shoes completely worn out, and the sole of the other flapping.

General Orders, No. 15, from Headquarters Coast Division, ordered us aboard the transports Monday, January 6, 1862.\* The transports ordered for the First Brigade were side-wheel steamers *New Brunswick*, *New York* and *Guide*; propellers *Vidette*, three guns; *Zouave*, four guns; *Ranger*, four guns, and *Hussar*, four guns; bark *Guerilla*; and schooners *Highlander* and *Recruit*.

For the Second Brigade, side-wheel steamers *Northerner* and *Cossack*; propellers *Lancer*, four guns, and *Pioneer*, four guns; ships *Kitty Simpson* and *Ann E. Thompson*; brig *Dragoon*, and schooner *Scout*.

For the Third Brigade, steamer *Eastern Queen*; propellers *Sentinel*, four guns, and *Chasseur*, four guns; ships *Arrican* and *John Trucks*; barks *Vol-*

\* This arrangement of vessels was afterward changed in some particulars, as the exigencies of the service required.

*tiguer* and *H. D. Brookman*, and schooner *Skirmisher*.

For the transportation of the troops and their material, forty-six vessels were employed, eleven of which were steamers. To these were added nine armed propellers to act as gunboats, and five barges\* fitted and armed as floating batteries, carrying altogether forty-seven guns, mostly of small calibre. These formed the army division of the fleet, and were commanded by Commander Samuel F. Hazard.

Monday, January 6, 1862, with about an inch of snow on the ground, and the thermometer eighteen degrees above zero, we started from our camp about 10 o'clock A. M., and marching and waiting about in the Naval Academy yard, we were much chilled when we finally went aboard our vessel at about dark. Tuesday, January 7th, I find myself on the schooner *Highlander*, originally the *Claremont*, of

\* One of these barges (canal boats), the *Bombshell*, was converted at New Berne by being lengthened forward, and having some second-hand machinery put into her, into the Army Gunboat *Bombshell*. When the rebels captured Plymouth, N. C., she was among the prizes they got. She came down the Roanoke river with the rebel ram *Albemarle* to attack our fleet in May, 1864, and fell an easy prey to our gunboats, and then she became the Navy Gunboat *Bombshell*.

561 tons, centreboard, built in New Jersey in 1858, for the Southern pine trade. She is very commodious between decks, the tallest man can walk upright; she has wooden bunks along the sides, with beds of straw or seaweed, and two rows of canvas cots on each side, with two passageways thirty inches wide on either side of the vessel; all the bunks were three tiers high. About five hundred of our regiment are on board this schooner, some between decks, and as many more in the lower hold. My company, A, are fortunate in being between decks, and my bunk, numbered 169, is on the starboard side, upper tier, and near the main hatch, decidedly cool, but healthful. Forward between decks on the starboard side is the galley, with large coppers for cooking the rations of the soldiers, and smaller ones for messes for the cabin. On the port side forward was the sink for use of the men, and as it was the only place that smoking was allowed below, it was generally filled with smokers.

The harbor at Annapolis was full of vessels of all sizes, kinds and descriptions: huge sidewheelers, capable of carrying a thousand men; propellers, old

North river hay droghers, looking top heavy ; ships, barks, brigs, schooners, down to little tugs, a formidable looking lot, and manned largely by detached soldiers, one hundred and forty having been sent from the Twenty-third Massachusetts, and ten from my own company. The right wing of our regiment, Companies A, F, D, I and B, is on the schooner *Highlander*, A, F, and part of D, between decks, and the balance below. It is also headquarters here, and we have the Colonel, Surgeon, Adjutant and Quartermaster with us. The left wing is on the propeller *Hussar*, and there we have the Lieutenant-Colonel, Major, Chaplain, Sergeant-Major, and Band. The *Hussar* carries two thirty-pound Parrots, and two six-pound Wiards, and is to tow us when she can. We nicknamed her the blacksmith-shop.

Wednesday, January 8th, during the afternoon, we are towed into position by the *Hussar*, and Thursday, 9th, at 8 a. m., we all started. We were towed along at about five knots an hour. It came up foggy during the afternoon and compelled us to anchor before midnight. We started Friday, 10th,

in the forenoon, arriving at and anchoring in Hampton Roads before 3 P. M. Saturday, 11th, in the afternoon, I saw a boat preparing to go ashore. Looking her over I saw a chance for a change, and tumbled into her, just as if I was one of the regular crew, and as they were all detailed soldiers, it was hard to tell who belonged in her. I took the bow oar, the easiest of the lot, and away we went. We had a chance to look things over. I saw a very large gun on the beach, either the Floyd or the Union gun; went into the sutler's; looked around for about an hour, and returned to our ship. This was the only boat ashore from our vessel, and I was lucky.

January 11th, this same Saturday, we started after dark, before 12 P. M., still in tow of the *Hussar*, and to help along, made sail on the schooner. Sunday, 12th, when we got outside the Capes, the wind came out dead ahead, freshening every minute. We had to take in all sail, and as we went along the sea was getting higher and higher, the boat was rolling heavily and pitching into it finely, and we making barely a knot an hour. About 4 o'clock P. M., this

Sunday, we were hailed from the *Hussar* and told to cut the hawser. Captain Dayton, master of the schooner, gave orders to make sail. First, we reefed the mainsail, then double reefed the foresail, and loosed the jib, and when these sails were set, one cut severed the hawser, and we were off on our own hook.

By this time all the sailing vessels had been dropped by the towing steamers and left to their own resources, the steamers making for Hatteras Inlet, getting in there Monday, 13th. We had sailed from Fort Monroe with sealed orders, to be opened when well out to sea, which, when opened, were found to direct us to make for and enter Hatteras Inlet. About the time we cut loose from the *Hussar*, we didn't care where we went to. There were five hundred or more of us on board a schooner, very badly adapted for the situation, for she had no centreboard, it having either been lost out of her, or so cramped in her as to be unmanageable, and she rolled and pitched about so that nearly every man was seasick.

During Sunday night the wind went down, we

set all sail, standing off and on until morning, the wind being ahead. In the morning the wind shifted to northeast and increased in velocity. When off Hatteras Cape a squall struck us, blew the flying jib out of the bolt ropes, and nearly capsized us; everything was let go by the run and came down handsomely, except the mainsail, that stuck badly, and the captain of the schooner ran up the rigging, jumped on to the gaff and started it down. With everything down we lay nearly an hour, the boat rolling fearfully and throwing some of the boys out of their berths. Then small sail was made on the vessel, and we, standing on the larboard tack, heading off shore, made a little headway. After a while we wore ship and stood in shore, and about 3 p. m. Monday, 13th, dropped anchor in Hatteras Cove, close to Cape Hatteras, in seven fathoms of water, about one and a half miles from shore, and four or five from the Inlet. We were now comparatively safe, but we had had a fearful experience, and were in great danger, and so had all the fleet.

I had been on deck nearly all the time, making myself useful, and had seen most of the storm. It

was my first appearance at sea, and I wanted to see all that I could of it. I sat on the windlass and felt the bow of the schooner go down, down, till it seemed that she would go over endways, and then I saw the stern go down, and the waves, several mountains high, apparently coming on top of us, and I wanted to go home.

We hung at one anchor in Hatteras Cove, Monday night, and nearly all day Tuesday. Tuesday, p. m., 14th, we dropped another anchor, and payed out more chain and hung until Wednesday morning, 15th, when the wind having gone down, we hove short and set signals for pilot and tug. A tug soon came alongside and ordered us to get under way and make for the entrance to the Inlet, where we will get towed in. The wind was light and baffling, and we did not make much headway, but soon the sidewheeler *Patuxent* took our hawser and started us for the bar. We are hardly well under way when we see a ship's boat, apparently capsized, with men clinging to her. Our boats are lowered at once, and we succeed in picking up eleven men and getting them on board the *Highlander*. Two of the

men are dead, and one was drowned when the boat was capsized. There were twelve in all, and they were from the ship *Ann E. Thompson*. There were the captain and second mate of the ship, and the colonel, lieutenant-colonel, surgeon, quarter-master, and some men of the Ninth New Jersey. They had been in to report the arrival of their vessel, and were swamped in the breakers on the bar coming out. The second mate of the ship was drowned, and the colonel and surgeon of the Ninth New Jersey died on our vessel.

On our left as we go in we see the steamer *City of New York* ashore and breaking up. She was a total loss. She was loaded with ordnance, which was also lost. As we get inside we see the propeller *Zouave* sunk. We learn that she rode over her anchor and knocked a hole in her bottom. She was also a total loss. Astern of us as we are anchored is a schooner on a bar in a sinking condition, flying signals of distress.

Hatteras Inlet is one of those freaks of nature on the coast of North Carolina. It was solid ground, cultivated, bearing figs, grapes, vegetables, and cov-

ered with trees on September 6, 1846, but on the next day it was an entranceway to the sounds, having been cut through by a heavy storm during the night. In 1862, on the bar outside, was some thirteen feet of water, and on the bar inside, called "The Swash," was barely seven and a half feet at high tide.

This place was captured from the Confederates, August 28-29, 1861, by a combined naval and army expedition, under Commodore Stringham and General Butler. Their orders were to destroy the forts and abandon the place, but General Butler recommended that they be held, for the situation was one of great importance. August 30th, Colonel Rush C. Hawkins landed at Hatteras Inlet, and, being the senior colonel present, assumed command. Brigadier-General Reynolds was ordered there from Fort Monroe, to proceed September 14th and take command, but did not go at all, from some reasons about force not to be increased. Brig.-Gen. J. K. F. Mansfield arrived here October 8, 1861, and relieved Colonel Hawkins, and October 13th he was relieved by Brig.-Gen. Thomas Williams, who was

in command when we arrived. This force consisted of Ninth New York, Forty-eighth Pennsylvania Infantry, and Battery C, United States Artillery, in all about 1,900 men. General Burnside, on his arrival at Hatteras Inlet, January 13, 1862, by General Orders, No. 1, assumed command of the Department of North Carolina. All the troop ships, except the bark *John Trucks*, had arrived. On her was the D'Epineuil Zouaves, Fifty-third New York. Her luck was hard: she ran ashore in Chesapeake Bay, and arrived at Fort Monroe one day after the fleet had sailed; then she was ten days getting to Hatteras; then anchored several miles from the Inlet. It was ten days more before the colonel could report to General Burnside. Then it was found that she drew too much water to get in over the bar, and finally she was ordered back and landed her troops at Annapolis, Wednesday, February 6th, thirty-four days after she started. Lieutenant-Colonel Monteil, of this regiment, stopped with the forces at Hatteras, and was killed at Roanoke Island.

A return from the Department of North Carolina, for January, 1862, gives the number of troops pres-

ent as 12,829. General Burnside, finding that he could not use so many men to advantage as he had afloat, landed at this point the Sixth New Hampshire, Eleventh Connecticut, and Eighty-ninth New York, also the Rhode Island Battery. He took from the island the Ninth New York.

The General had been deceived as to the depth of the water on the Swash, or he had deceived himself, for while seven and a half feet was all that could ordinarily be carried over at high tide, he had an idea that there was eight and a half feet or more. All of the vessels had to be lightened, and it was not till January 30th that five of the tugs ordered and expected had arrived. Many of the vessels were lightened of everything, even to soldiers, to assist in getting them over. Our schooner one day had two steamers tugging at her, but she couldn't be started. However, the next day, Saturday, January 25th, when it had cleared up, and wind gone down, one tug got us over. We were glad; we had been on short allowance of water and food ever since we had been here. One day, three hardtack for all day; another, one gill of tea, and some days no

water at all. We got so ravenous for water, that once as General Burnside was passing us, in the *Picket*, we swarmed up the rigging, and all hands, as one man, called for water! water! I can't say that it made General Burnside feel any better, but it helped us a great deal.

One day, during a rain storm, I secured the use of a bucket, and with that and my quart dipper, took position under the main boom, and caught the drippings down the mast. I secured two-thirds of a pail full of water. It was fresh, any way, even if it did have a compound flavor of tar and slush, and I managed to get a good drink, as well as a chance to wash my hands, for they needed it sadly. Attempts were made to catch water in sails, but they did not succeed very well. We also went to a steamer that had a condenser, and got several barrels of hot water from her, but we never had water enough. Scarcity of water led to inefficient cooking, and our rice and peas were not half cooked. In fact, after eating split pea soup one day, some of the boys said they could hear them rattle as they jumped about.

While we were lying here, these three weeks or

more, our time was passed in reading, if we had anything to read, playing cards, etc. We were a pretty nice set on board the *Highlander*, but the left wing on the *Hussar* were just horrid, they actually, accidentally, started a barrel of whiskey into the coppers to make tea of, and I suppose would have drank it, had the lieutenant-colonel not discovered it and ordered it thrown overboard ; and they gambled for money, too. This horrified the chaplain, and after a visit to the *Highlander*, where he observed the boys playing poker for beans, he, on his return, held us up to the left wing as models of propriety. Perhaps if he had seen the beans settled for, he wouldn't have been so pleased.

On board the schooner *Highlander* were two rifled guns, mounted for use on the vessel. Men were detailed from the various companies on board to drill at these guns, it having been determined to take them ashore and fight them. Among the number detailed was myself, and I was ordered to report to Captain Dayton, of the schooner, for further instructions ; but before I had drilled once, it was discovered that there was no field carriage for the piece.

The idea of taking two guns ashore was abandoned, and the crew of one only was drilled in the use of artillery. On board each of the gunboats of the army division some men had been drilled to work the guns, and thus add to the force of the bombardment. One of the most useful of the vessels of the fleet was the sternwheeler *Union*. We nicknamed her the *Wheelbarrow*, and claimed that she wheeled herself over where she couldn't steam; but there were not many of these places, for her draft of water was very small.

At last, the last thing to get ready was ready, and on the morning of February 5, 1862 (Wednesday), we started for Roanoke Island. It was a splendid day; the water was very smooth; the wind was light, and it was comfortably warm. There are with us now fifteen or more gunboats of all kinds; the whole fleet numbering twenty, including the sloop *Granite*, and carrying about fifty-seven guns of all sizes and weights. Beside the troops already mentioned, on the gunboats, both army and navy, are one company,

B, of the Ninety-ninth New York\* and some detachments of the New York Marine Artillery. This Ninety-ninth New York is essentially a Massachusetts regiment, Colonel and all, and should have been numbered with its men. We are started. Away ahead, as far as one can see, are gunboats; nearer, is another line of gunboats, then comes our line of transports, the steamer *New York* towing schooners *Highlander*, *Skirmisher* and *S. P. Bailey*; the steamer *New Brunswick* towing schooners *Recruit* and *E. W. Farrington*; steamer *Guide* towing schooners *Sea Bird* and *Emma*; and on the flanks sail the army gunboats, carrying their men as they brought them from Annapolis, and acting as a guard for the fleet.

\* The detachment of the Ninety-ninth New York was on *navy* gunboats; thirty-nine men and a first lieutenant on the *Southfield*, thirty-five men and a second lieutenant on the *Hunchback*, twenty-three men and a first sergeant on the *Morse*. These men joined these gunboats at Fort Monroe, were dressed and drilled as sailors, landed as sailors at Roanoke Island, February 7, 1862, with six boat howitzers, and took part in the engagement February 8th, having three men killed and eleven wounded. The navy has credit for the part taken by these men in the battle of February 8th, although, as shown here, the men were soldiers. These men were relieved in August, 1862, and rejoined their regiment in September of that year.

We went along slowly and smoothly all day, and came to anchor about 5 or 6 p. m. Next morning, Thursday, we start about 8 a. m., and during the afternoon we anchor in sight of the island. It has rained all day, but we have been on deck looking at the scenery, and wondering what will come next. Friday, 7th, at about half-past ten, we get under way, and soon pass the marshes through a very narrow channel, and slowly forge ahead. The gunboats are going for the forts, and about half-past eleven the ball began by a shot from one of our gunboats.

Roanoke Island, right after the fall of Hatteras Inlet in 1861, was occupied by the Third Georgia, under command of Colonel Wright, under orders from General Huger, at Norfolk, and the principal defenses were constructed under General Huger's instructions. September 6, 1861, Colonel Wright sends word to General Huger: "We hope to have seven guns mounted in the Pork Point battery to-night, and will commence on the Weir Point battery so soon as we can get the engineers to look after the work." September 22d, he says: "The Weir Point battery is nearly finished, and I will to-day finish a

field work about six miles below the Weir Point battery, at the causeway, across the marsh on the centre of the island." He further says, under this date of September 22d: "Colonel Shaw's regiment arrived here about mid-day yesterday" About December 1st, the Thirty-first North Carolina replaced the Third Georgia, the latter returning to the Department of Norfolk. The island was under charge of the following officers successively: Brig.-Gen. D. H. Hill; then Brig.-Gen. L. O'B. Branch, finally Brig.-Gen. Henry A. Wise, who reached the island January 6th, and was in command when we got there, but owing to a very severe attack of pleurisy, threatening pneumonia, which confined him to his bed, was unable to be on the field, leaving the immediate command of the island in the hands of Col. H. M. Shaw, of the Eighth North Carolina.

The military defenses of Roanoke Island and its adjacent waters, February 8, 1862, consisted of Fort Bartow (Fort Foster), the most southern of the defenses on the west side of the island; a sand fort covered with turf, having six long thirty-two pounder guns in embrasure, and three thirty-two pounders *en*

*barbette*, one of which had been rifled and strengthened at the breech like the Parrott gun. Next is Fort Blanchard (Fort Parke), on the same side of the island, about two and a half miles from Fort Bartow, a semi-circular sand fort, turfed, and mounting four thirty-two pounders *en barbette*. Next, on the same side, and about twelve hundred yards from Fort Blanchard, is Fort Huger (Fort Reno), a turfed sand fort, running along the side of the beach, and closed in the rear by a low breastwork, with a banquette for infantry, having eight thirty-two pounders in embrasure, two rifled thirty-two pounders (like that in Fort Bartow) *en barbette*, and two small thirty-two pounders *en barbette* on the right. About three miles below Fort Bartow, on the east side of the island, was a battery of two thirty-two pounder guns, *en barbette*, at a point known as Midgett's Hommock. In the centre of the island, about two miles from Bartow, and a mile from Midgett's Hommock, was a redoubt, or breastwork, thrown across the road, about seventy or eighty feet long, with embrasures for three guns, and here were used the three pieces of field artillery, one a heavy twenty-four pounder boat

howitzer, one a six pounder brass field gun, model 1846, and the other an eighteen pounder brass field gun, a Mexican trophy. There were no caissons with these pieces. On the main land, nearly opposite Fort Huger, was Fort Forrest, mounting seven thirty-two pounders. In addition to these defenses named, was a barrier of piles nearly across Croatan Sound, except that a span of about seventeen hundred yards was open opposite Fort Bartow; and on the other end of the line of piles, near the main land, vessels had been sunk to close up that channel; also a naval fleet of seven small gunboats under Commander Lynch.

The military force upon the island at the time of the commencement of the engagement was the Eighth North Carolina State troops, Thirty-first North Carolina, and three companies of the Seventeenth North Carolina. On the morning of February 7th, General Wise sent from Nag's Head, under Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson, of the Fifty-ninth Virginia, a force of about four hundred and fifty men, two companies from the Forty-sixth Virginia, eight companies from the Fifty-ninth Virginia. After much delay they arrived at

the earthwork on the main road at about 6 p. m. On February 8th, the Second North Carolina Battalion, under Lieutenant-Colonel Green, landed at the north end of the island about 12 m., just in time to be taken prisoners. Major Fry, of the Forty-sixth Virginia, also arrived with four companies of the Forty-sixth Virginia, about one hundred and fifty men, from Nag's Head, too late to be of any use, except to swell the number of prisoners taken.

At about 11.30 a. m. on the 7th of February, the ball was opened by a shot from one of our vessels, and the bombardment became general as the vessels could get into position. The enemy replied from four guns in Fort Bartow that could be brought to bear on us. Our forces moved to the right more, so as to mask one of the guns from which the enemy only fired fourteen shots, and concentrated their fire on the three barbette guns, which was all that they could use. We viewed this engagement from our transports,—sailing transports. Some of the steam transports had gone into the fight with the navy. On these steam transports were companies from the infantry. On the *Hussar* was Company E, of the

Twenty-third Massachusetts ; on the *Vidette*, Company C, of the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts ; on the *Ranger*, Company E, of the Twenty-seventh Massachusetts, and on the *Pioneer*, some of the Fifty-first New York. The balance of the infantry that was on these gunboats had been removed to the transports, those of our regiment having come aboard the *Highlander* Thursday, 6th, in the afternoon, filling our schooner to overflowing.

During this fight the most cheering sight was the movements of the little sloop *Granite*. With an off-shore wind she sailed back and forth in front of the fort, and in passing each time gave them a shot with her thirty-two pounder. She behaved splendidly, and earned the plaudits so freely bestowed on her. The bombardment continued all day. The troops began to land about 4 p. m. in Ashby's Harbor, on the north side, in front of Haman's house. It was intended that the landing should be made at Ashby's, but a force of the enemy being discovered there, the idea was abandoned, and the troops landed just above. A few shells from the *Delaware* and *Picket* quickly drove the enemy away, and the land-

ing of the troops was unmolested. General Foster, on the *Pilot Boy*, General Reno, with the *Union* and *Patuxent*, and General Parke, on the *Phœnix*, each steamer towing boats filled with men, landed in about twenty minutes over 4,000 men. General Foster's brigade was landed first, but that of General Reno would have got there first, but Reno was ordered to wait, by General Burnside, till the boat howitzers from the navy could be attached to his steamers. While thus waiting, General Foster, on the *Pilot Boy*, passed him. There was hardly a second between the landing of detachments from the regiments of the First Brigade, Twenty-third, Twenty-fifth and Twenty-seventh Massachusetts.

The force of the enemy at Ashby's had retreated up the island, as much from fear of being cut off as from fear of the shells from the gunboats, for the road from Haman's struck the main road above where the road from Ashby's did, and there was a swamp between the two, impassable for artillery ; and again they had orders to secure the artillery at all events. My company landed after dark, on, it seemed to me, a quaking bog. I had hardly started from the boats,

making for a fire up on the shore, when my right leg went into a bog hole up to my hips. I got out of it, and managed to reach dry land without more mis-haps. Our two guns were landed by the *Pilot Boy* about 9 P. M., but only one was hauled ashore, as there were only one gun crew drilled.

I soon found my company, and proceeded to make up my bed with my chum. We were in a cornfield back of the house. We pulled up the stalks, placed them lengthwise between the rows; placed one rubber blanket under us, got up back to back, and pulled the other blanket over us, and went to sleep. We didn't go to sleep, for just then it commenced to rain, and up we got, and I commenced wandering, which continued all night. I got into New York and Pennsylvania regiments, and observed things as well as I could. I finally crawled into a dog kennel that stood in front of the dwelling-house, and thought I had secured dry lodgings for the night, but soon was roused up and out by a strange voice that said, "that's my house." I guess it was his, for I was some distance from my own regiment, and I got out of it, and again wandered. As soon as it

was daylight we got ourselves together and prepared to start off.

By 12 o'clock on the night of the 7th all the troops had been landed, except the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts, detained by grounding of the steamer at the marshes. Pickets had been placed around our entire bivouac from the Twenty-fifth Massachusetts, Tenth Connecticut, and Fourth Rhode Island.

The Eighth Connecticut was left at the landing, deployed north of Haman's house to prevent a flank movement by the enemy on our left, and the Fifth Rhode Island Battalion had been placed at Ashby's to protect the right and rear in conjunction with a boat's crew from the *Delaware*, under Captain DeWolf, who patrolled the shore. There had been, and was, complete co-operation between the army and navy in this whole expedition, and its success was largely owing to the good feeling prevailing.

The Twenty-first Massachusetts had been on picket on the road during the night up to a brook that ran across the roads. When our regiment passed through them, following the Twenty-fifth, I overheard Colonel Maggi tell Colonel Kurtz that one of

their pickets was missing, and one had come in wounded. A few rods beyond them we passed through a brook about to the knees of the short men. We had to wade, and the water was very cold. We marched along about a mile or so when we heard firing. Soon we came into a clearing and saw the Twenty-fifth in action ahead of us, with skirmishers ahead. We fell into column, by division, behind them, advanced when they did, and halted when they did. We were just in range of the bullets, and their song was quite audible.

The enemy had a three gun battery at the further end of a road through and across a swamp. They had cut trees down some sixty or eighty yards across, and five or six hundred yards down the road, making an oblong cleared space into which the road entered at the right hand lower corner, making a sharp turn at once to the left, and running to the upper corner diagonally opposite. At this point they had a turf battery, embrasured for three guns, and in it were a twenty-four pound howitzer on the right, a six pounder brass in the centre, and an eighteen pounder on the left; these three guns completely

covered the road to the turn, but they were not calculated to cover anything else, and were firing in one direction all the time, having no sweep to right or left, at least they didn't use them except down the road, their determination being to keep the road clear at all events ; for the eighteen pounder gun they had only twelve pounder ammunition. They had about 800 men at the battery, deployed on either side and in reserve, and reckoned to hold the fort if we insisted on coming up the road, the marshes on either flank being considered impassable.

After our regiment had for some time been supporting the Twenty-fifth, we were ordered by the right flank across the fire of the guns, into the woods and swamp to try and flank the enemy. We started off, and on entering the woods went across the fire, and here lost several men killed. Company A, my company, right flank, went ahead, and passed through the woods, followed by the balance of the regiment. After a while we came to an open morass, and skirted the woods to our left, keeping close to them, made as fast as we could for the enemy. We were seen as soon as we emerged, and fired on, but

kept going. We were some three hours getting through this swamp.

When the Confederates cut down the trees on their left, they left a strip several rods in width between the clearing in their front and the open morass, and this it was that thus enabled our regiment to get so far to their rear before being discovered, the woods here being very close, with vines and briars intertwined, so that at places it was impossible to pass. Our regiment got far enough to open a raking fire, with four companies on their flank, and Company A got further to the rear under cover of the thicket, and up on to the dry land. While we are doing this the Twenty-fifth Massachusetts in front has been relieved by the Tenth Connecticut. The Twenty-first Massachusetts, Fifty-first New York, and Ninth New Jersey have been pushed along on the right of the enemy in the order named, and the Fifty-first New York is being still further thrown to the left, three companies having got to the left of the Twenty-first Massachusetts when the charge is made.

In the road are six guns from the navy, and our

Twenty-third Massachusetts gun from the *Highlander*. Only two guns are used at a time, as the field is narrow, and the troops are all over it, and even *they* do not continue firing through the action. Our gun does not go into action at all, but is in reserve, with the four navy howitzers.

The Twenty-seventh Massachusetts has assayed to follow the Twenty-third on the right, and following them are the Fourth Rhode Island, while the Fifty-first Pennsylvania, having gone to the left and finding it impossible to advance, had left two companies, and now threw their other eight companies up with the Twenty-seventh. It was at this time that the Ninth New York came on to the field. They were ordered to the right, and two companies, led by Colonel Hawkins, had got out of sight in the woods when the General, seeing that there was confusion in the enemy's forces, ordered them to charge. Major Kimball gallantly led off, but just at this time the Tenth Connecticut, in their gray uniforms, came to their feet, and a volley from the enemy came, and the Zouaves failed to respond. They fell back down the road in confusion, but were soon rallied and ran

up the road making as much noise as though they had driven the enemy. When they got to the battery, there were in it ahead of them some of the Twenty-third Massachusetts from the right, and the Twenty-first Massachusetts, Ninth New Jersey, and Fifty-first New York from the left. The famous charge of the Ninth New York, Hawkins' Zouaves, where they are pictured climbing over the fort and bayoneting the enemy and crying Zou ! Zou ! never happened, except in the minds of some newspaper reporters and picture makers.

In fact the charging on the battery was not the cause of the retreat anyway, for when the charge was made there wasn't a live Confederate in Fort Defiance that could get away. They left because they were flanked out; while their right flank was occupied with the troops there, the Twenty-third Massachusetts had succeeded in getting so far to their left rear as to threaten their capture, and they ran. Their left wing went first. I have a letter from Col. J. M. Whitson, now living on Roanoke Island, who was then captain in the Eighth North Carolina, and in charge of the company on the right flank of the

breastwork, in which he says: "Hearing some confusion to our left, I looked, and found that all the troops, except my company, had left the works. I had not heard the order to retreat, but now gave it. I was slightly wounded in the leg while getting away." This battery was on what the Confederates called Suple's Hill, but there is no hill there; it is simply a piece of dry ground, and called Suple's Hill, from the fact that a man named Suple once lived some rods north of it. This fort was built on the edge of an open swamp, which to-day remains as open as it was in 1862. The earthwork is plain, the ditch is there, but the briars and vines have grown right down to the inside edge of the earthwork.

At one time when we were well into the swamp, with the thicket on the left, I heard a voice seemingly close to us give the order, "Cease firing." Then I heard cheering; soon the firing began again. This order was given by one of the enemy, and we were then on their flank. In General Wise's report to Jefferson Davis, President, etc., dated July 13, 1862, he says: "And until the enemy advanced under a white flag, firing at our men as they cheered a sup-

posed surrender." This must have been what I heard, and it is evident that the enemy had not got acquainted with the white State flag of Massachusetts. I find the account of this order to cease firing and the cheering in a letter that I wrote home in February, dated February 14th.

This engagement was fought by the three subordinate Generals, they acting with perfect co-operation. General Burnside in his report says : "I beg leave to say that I must refer you almost entirely to the reports of my brigadier-generals for an accurate knowledge of their movements during the day, as the face of the island precluded the possibility of any general oversight of operations on the field." General Burnside was at or near the Haman house sending up reinforcements, ammunition, etc.

It is to be remembered that there was not a horse landed, and all the movements were directed on foot, and ammunition, etc., carried by hand ; although many regiments are mentioned as being in action, the field was so small, and the obstacles so many, that only a part of each got into action ; the Twenty-third Massachusetts firing from four companies im-

mediately on the flank of the enemy ; the Twenty-seventh could only fire one company at a time, both the flanks being partly covered by troops ; the Ninth New Jersey, Tenth Connecticut, and those on our left, Twenty-first Massachusetts, Fifty-first New York, etc., all lapping each other. The Twenty-fourth Massachusetts unfortunately arrived on the battle-field too late to take part in the action. Two companies were detailed to carry ammunition forward from the landing, and the other seven went on with General Foster to the upper end of the island, the Twenty-third being immediately behind them. On the way up two companies of the Twenty-fourth were detached to go along the shore and bring in prisoners, who were reported escaping.

This was a most tiresome march of a half-dozen miles, more or less ; the road was strewed with *impedimenta* thrown away by the retreating enemy. We soon passed a cross road on which one gun or more had been placed ready for action, and I thought another fight was coming off. We expressed the opinion that "Burnie" was doing this, not by the day, but by the job, but we pressed on and soon

heard the news that they had surrendered to General Foster. I was glad for one. I was satisfied that they knew what was best for them. While we had been doing this, other troops had gone to the camp of the Thirty-first North Carolina (our camp being that of the Eighth North Carolina), and accepted their surrender, and others had gone to the forts and taken possession of them. "All the guns, excepting the three field pieces in the inland battery, had been spiked, and other ineffectual attempts made to render them unserviceable. Six of them were spiked with rat-tail files; the remainder with wrought-iron spikes and nails. They were all loaded, some with several shot wedged, and others with charged shells unfused and inverted, so arranged as to explode in the gun if fired." These were all removed without accident, and the guns made serviceable in a short time. The total number of cannon captured was forty-two. About 1,500 muskets were preserved, of those taken, the troops being armed also with fowling pieces, sporting rifles, etc. The guns preserved were of smooth-bore pattern, made at Harper's Ferry in 1832, and altered

from flint locks. The number of prisoners surrendered was between 2,500 and 3,000, many escaping by boats, etc., to Nag's Head, where was General Wise, who was carried off in a wagon, being unable to ride or walk. The enemy's loss, in addition to those surrendered, was killed, 23; wounded, 58; missing 62; total, 143. Our loss was killed, 37; wounded, 214; missing, 13; 264 in all.

The position of the battery was apparently a strong one; coupled with their opinion that the swamp and marsh on either side were impassable, was the fact that there was no other road leading up the island, and therefore they could not be flanked; and they had a force at the work sufficient to have caused great slaughter, had their idea of the situation been the true one. The Confederates speak of their left being guarded by a marsh, and their right by a swamp, but to any one not acquainted with the nomenclature it might be all swamp or all marsh; it was all water.

The news of this victory was very cheering to the North, coming, as it did, about the time of the capture of Forts Henry and Donelson. It was very

depressing to the South. This victory gave us a good foothold in North Carolina, and it put us right at the back door of Norfolk, and virtually compelled the evacuation of that place. May 3d, Gen. R. E. Lee writes to Gen. T. H. Holmes at Goldsborough, N. C. : "I must explain to you that it is in contemplation to withdraw the troops from Norfolk." General Wise says about Roanoke Island : "It was the key to all the rear defenses of Norfolk." "It should have been defended at the expense of 20,000 men and of many millions of dollars."

That night, Saturday, 8th of February, the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts was ordered to do guard duty, and our regiment and the Twenty-fifth turned in. We were assigned to some of the log barracks. There wasn't bunks enough for all, therefore I had the floor. I was wet, wet since landing Friday night, supplemented with some three hours in the wettest water in the marsh ; but I was tired, and spreading my rubber blanket down to keep us from falling through the cracks in the boarding, my chum and I nestled up to each other, *dos a dos*, covered ourselves with the other "gum," and surrendered to old

"balmy." I woke up in the night shaking all over, but went to sleep again until four in the morning, when I got up, went to the cook-house and found some of the boys enjoying coffee and fresh pork. I retain a pleasing memory of the camp: as one stood at the eastern end and looked west, on the left were the large, log barracks of the men; on the right, the smaller well constructed huts of the officers, and down the middle a row of four wells, with sweeps, the water in which tasted to us deliciously. We don't get any rations for several days, *i.e.*, any Union rations; we grub along as best we can. I find a wash-bowl which I fasten to myself for fear it will wander off and get lost, and this I find to be a whole household of tools. When I turn out, I wash face and hands in it; then rinsed out, I use it to mix flapjacks in, flapjacks compounded of Confederate flour, lard and water, cooked on a spade, and sugared with Confederate brown sugar. While these were cooking I was making coffee. I had fastened to a pint coffee-pot, found a coffee-mill nailed to a tree, and also some roasted coffee, which was not all coffee, but half sweet potatoes cut up into small cubes, the

size of a coffee berry, and roasted with the coffee. With this combination and a strong right hand I lived two or three days, till our Quartermaster found time to get some of Uncle Sam's rations ashore ; our Quartermaster in the meanwhile having got a severe reprimand from Colonel Kurtz for not attending to his duty better. Besides the uses named, that wash-bowl did duty as a wash-tub for washing shirts, etc. It was a combination utensil, without being patented.

We are on this island nearly a month, the General busied in sending off the prisoners paroled, capturing towns on Albermarle Sound, and stirring things up generally. Our Quartermaster hears of a schooner of perhaps fifty tons hid up Alligator river ; he gets permission to go for her on the *Hussar*. Captain Alexander and Company E go along ; they find her up a creek covered by bushes, and start down with her. Near the mouth of the Alligator they meet a gunboat of ours coming to them bristling with guns, run out, ready for action. The true condition of affairs is soon explained, and the vessels arrive safely at Roanoke Island. The schooner's name was *Cornelia Dunkirk*, but we called her the

*Gideon*, and *Gideon* she was known as, so long as she lived, which was several years after the war, she being used as a government freighter, and she ended her days sunk as a wharf boat at Hatteras Inlet. *Gideon* was derived from the famous song of "Gideon's Band," sung aboard the *Highlander*. I recollect some of it, which will illustrate its classical beauty :

The *Highlander* is the Gideon's pet,  
She took us through this damned inlet,  
She belongs to Gideon's Band.

Here's to the Surgeon of our wing,  
Its worth five dollars to hear him sing,  
He belongs to Gideon Band, etc., etc.

Thursday, March 6th, we went on board the *Highlander*; Friday, 7th, had a cold northeast snow storm; Saturday, 8th, it was clear but cold. We lay on board vessels until Tuesday, 11th, when we started down the sound in tow of steamer *New York*, but the wind being fair, we cast off from her and sailed for the rendezvous at Hatteras Inlet, where we arrived about dark; we remained here till next morning, Wednesday, 12th. Here we got a

mail from home, and started for New Berne. We anchored in the Neuse river, off Slocum's Creek, sixteen miles below New Berne, and lay there till Thursday, p. m., our wing of the regiment landing about 2 o'clock. While we were at Roanoke Island, the Eighty-ninth New York and Sixth New Hampshire were brought from Hatteras Inlet, and with the Ninth New York were designated to be left to garrison the island. The Eleventh Connecticut and Belger's Battery of Light Artillery were aboard ship to go with the force to New Berne; and the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania and the Company of First Artillery were to be left at Hatteras Inlet for a garrison, although a portion of this company having been used to man two thirty-two pounder field howitzers, for which horses and harnesses had been issued within a month, were taken along for light artillery.

The light artillery was not taken ashore at all, the guns ashore being the naval boat howitzers, and a gun each from the *Cossack* and *Highlander*, and these were hauled by hand, the soldiers pulling, and were got up very late at night, our regiment marching

along through the bivouac some time after dark, our company, A, hauling a gun and singing :

Come along, boys, and march to New Berne,  
Up to your knees in mud.

The next day, 14th, was the day of the battle, and our gun from the *Highlander* opened the ball on our side, and was alone in action long enough to fire between ten and twenty rounds before the others came up.

An account of the battle of New Berne does not come within the bounds of this paper.

